

U.S. Fed News

REP. ABERCROMBIE HONORED BY PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT FOR FILIPINO VETERANS LEGISLATION

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WASHINGTON U.S. Representative Neil Abercrombie has been recognized by the Government of the Philippines for his work in passage of legislation to provide long-promised compensation for Filipino military veterans who served as part of U.S. forces during World War II.

Language was included in the recent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to authorize lump sum payments for approximately 20,000 surviving Filipino WWII veterans who fought with U.S. troops. Abercrombie and other members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Daniel Inouye, who put the Filipino Veterans provision in the Senate bill, were recognized by Philippine Ambassador to the United States Willy C. Gaa.

"This is a victory for the brave Filipino veterans who have finally seen a 60-year old promise kept," said Abercrombie, who along with Rep. Mike Honda (CA) and other members of CAPAC, fought back efforts to remove the provision from the Economic Stimulus package. "These one time payments are not the full veterans benefits promised to these soldiers, but they signify our appreciation for their service and their sacrifice."

In July 1941, as the U.S. made preparations for the possibility of war with Japan, President Franklin Roosevelt called the Philippine Commonwealth Army into the service of the Armed Forces of the United States, and 250,000 Philippine soldiers were promised that they would earn the same benefits as U.S. soldiers.

That assurance was reversed after the war, but many in Congress have sought to make good on the government's pledge from 68 years ago. The authorization in the Economic Recovery legislation provided a one-time payment of \$15,000 to Filipino veterans who are now American citizens and \$9,000 to veterans who are Philippine citizens.

Qualified veterans have until February 16, 2010 to file their claims. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs said only living veterans can make claims, and estimated there are about 20,000. So far, only about 3,500 who have applied in the Philippines appear to be qualified, according to the DVA.